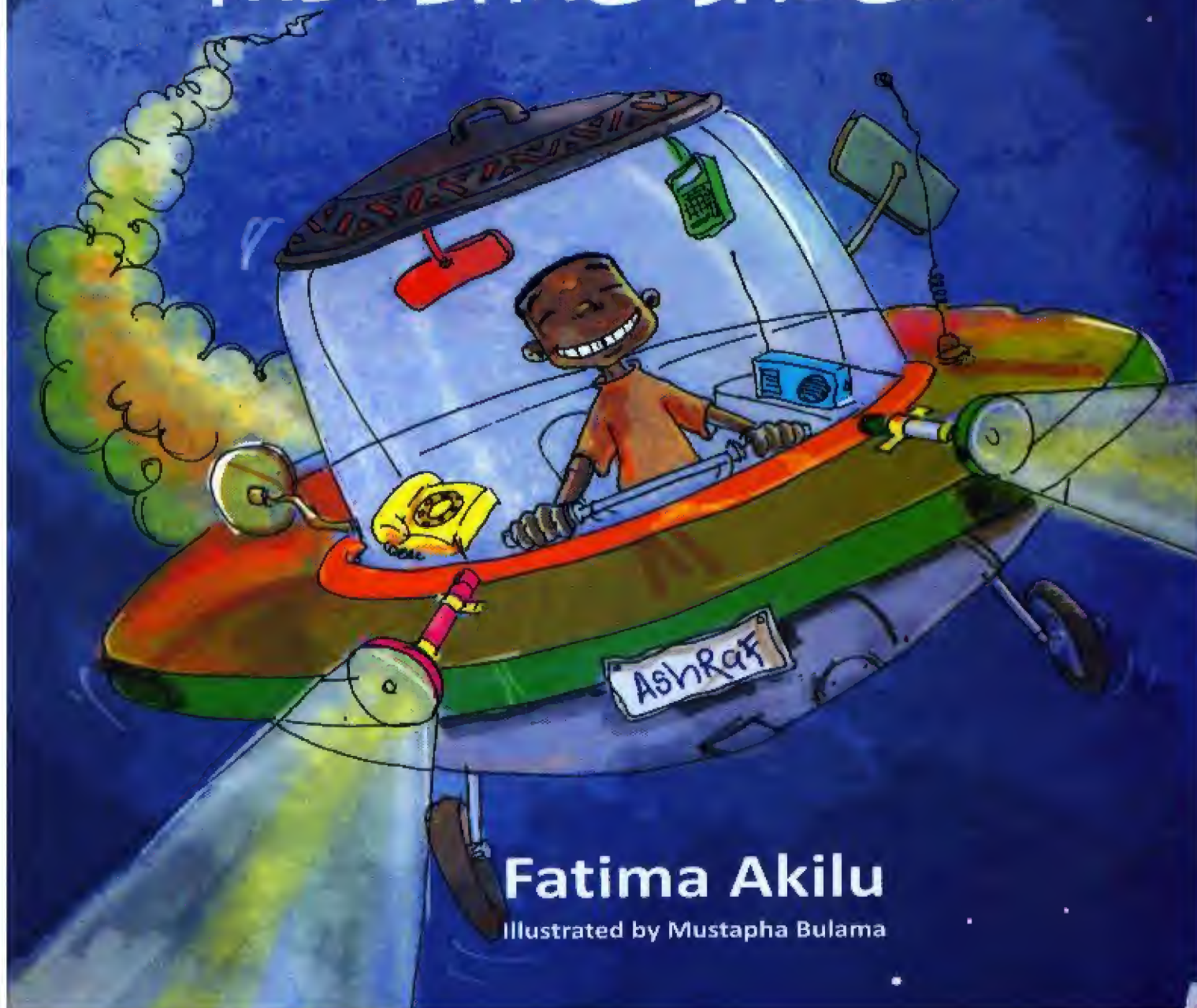


Ashraf

THE FLYING SAUCER



Fatima Akilu

Illustrated by Mustapha Bulama

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Illustrated by Mustapha Bulama
Edited by Jennyfer Cowan
Ashraf The Flying Saucer

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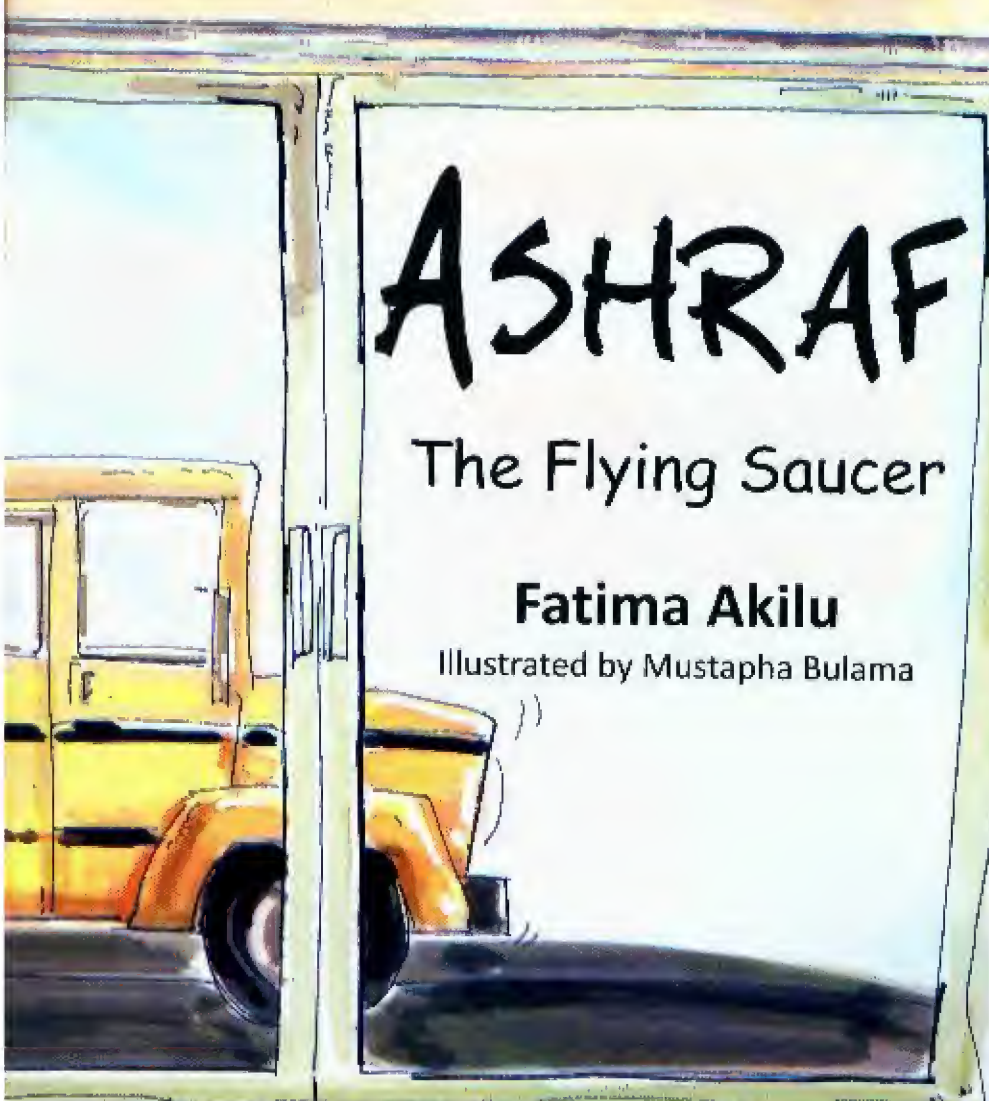


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Mocking
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The day began like any other day, except for one thing: Ashraf was in a hurry. He rushed to eat breakfast, he rushed to pick up his school bag and he rushed to get on the bus for school.



Everything else was happening slowly; he noticed that Ada the bus driver's foot barely touched the pedal. Ada was determined to take her time this morning.



When Ashraf finally glimpsed the low brown school building, he rushed to the front of the bus.

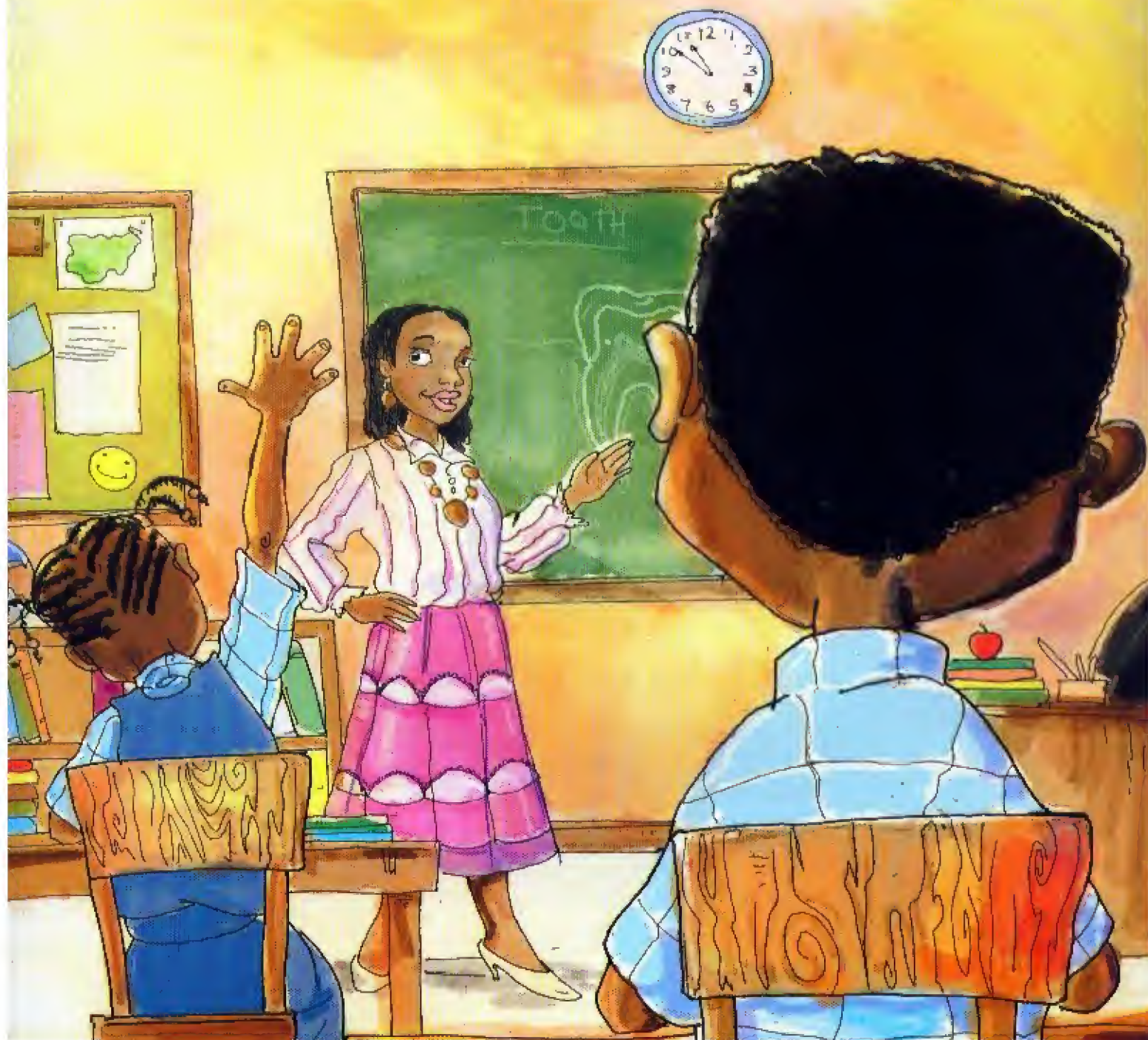
"Not so fast," Ada boomed.

"Wait for the bus to stop completely first."

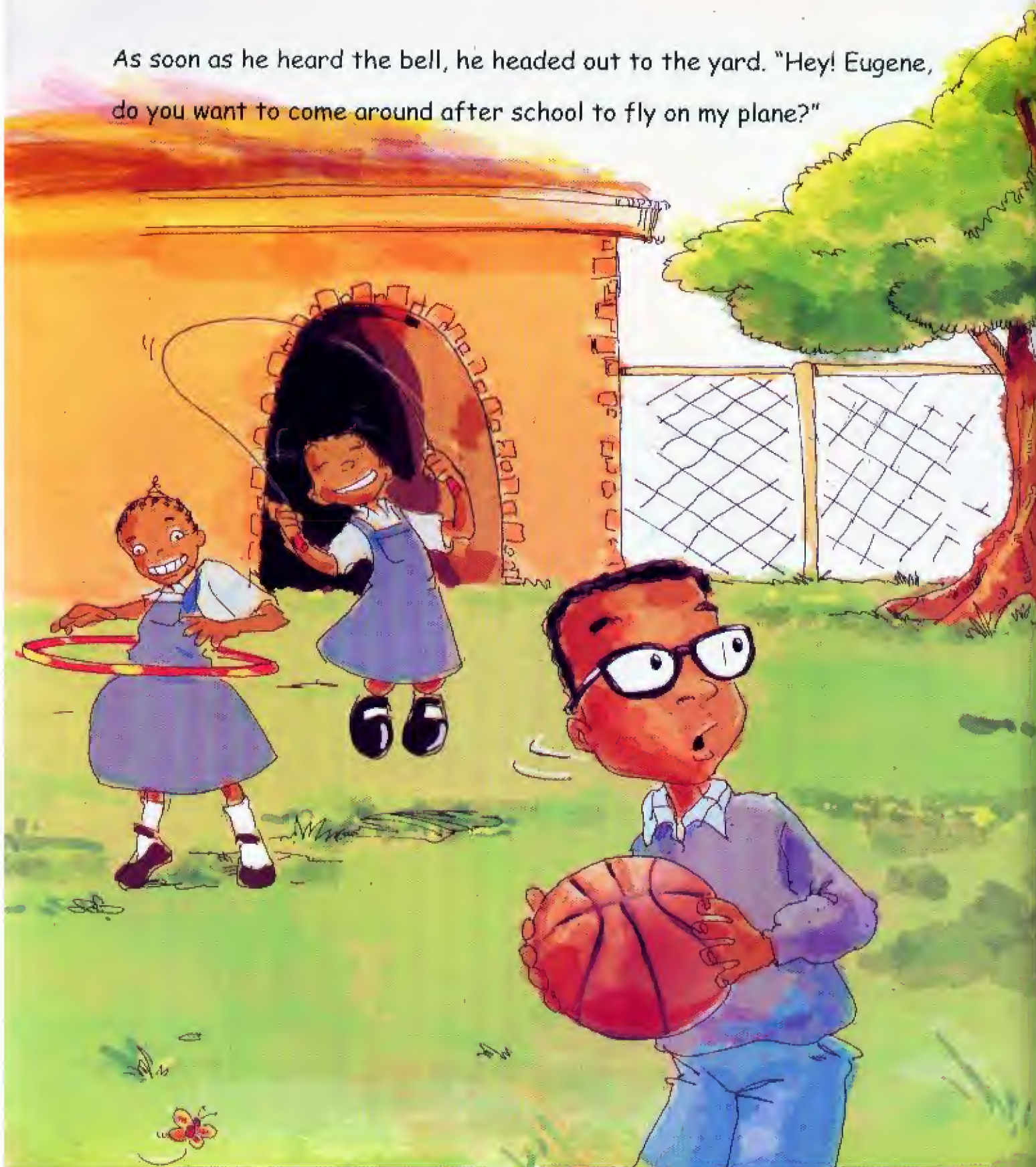


"Sorry Ada, I need to get to class right away," he called, as he jumped out of the bus and ran to his classroom.

First lesson was science, but Ashraf wasn't listening. His eyes were on the clock. He was waiting for the 11:00 am first break.

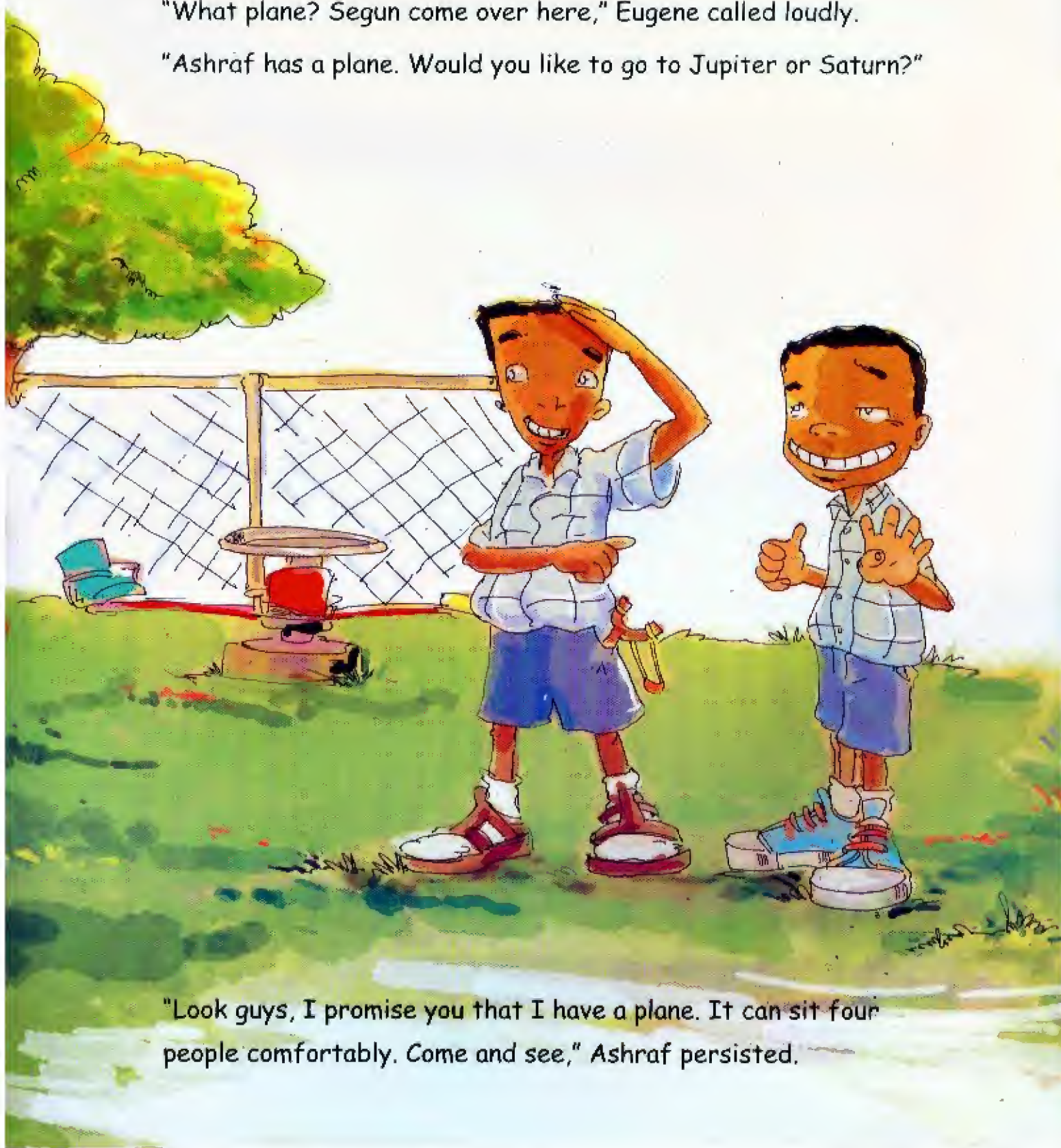


As soon as he heard the bell, he headed out to the yard. "Hey! Eugene, do you want to come around after school to fly on my plane?"



"What plane? Segun come over here," Eugene called loudly.

"Ashraf has a plane. Would you like to go to Jupiter or Saturn?"



"Look guys, I promise you that I have a plane. It can sit four people comfortably. Come and see," Ashraf persisted.

"Is it like the time you made a time capsule that could send us into the future?" Segun reminded him.



"I got into so much trouble thinking that I would wake up and find myself two grades up. I stopped studying for my exams and got all D's. Or is this like the time you dismantled your dad's radio, telling us that the radio frequencies can turn into waves that would make us invisible?" said Eugene.

"Oh yeah, I spent the weekend in detention for making faces and sticking my tongue out at the head master, thinking he wouldn't be able to see me," Segun laughed. "Ashraf, you just never give up!"



"Well, you must come. This time I have found the formula," Ashraf insisted.
"More like the formula for getting into trouble," Segun said, nudging Eugene.
"But I will come just for your mum's delicious chocolate cake."



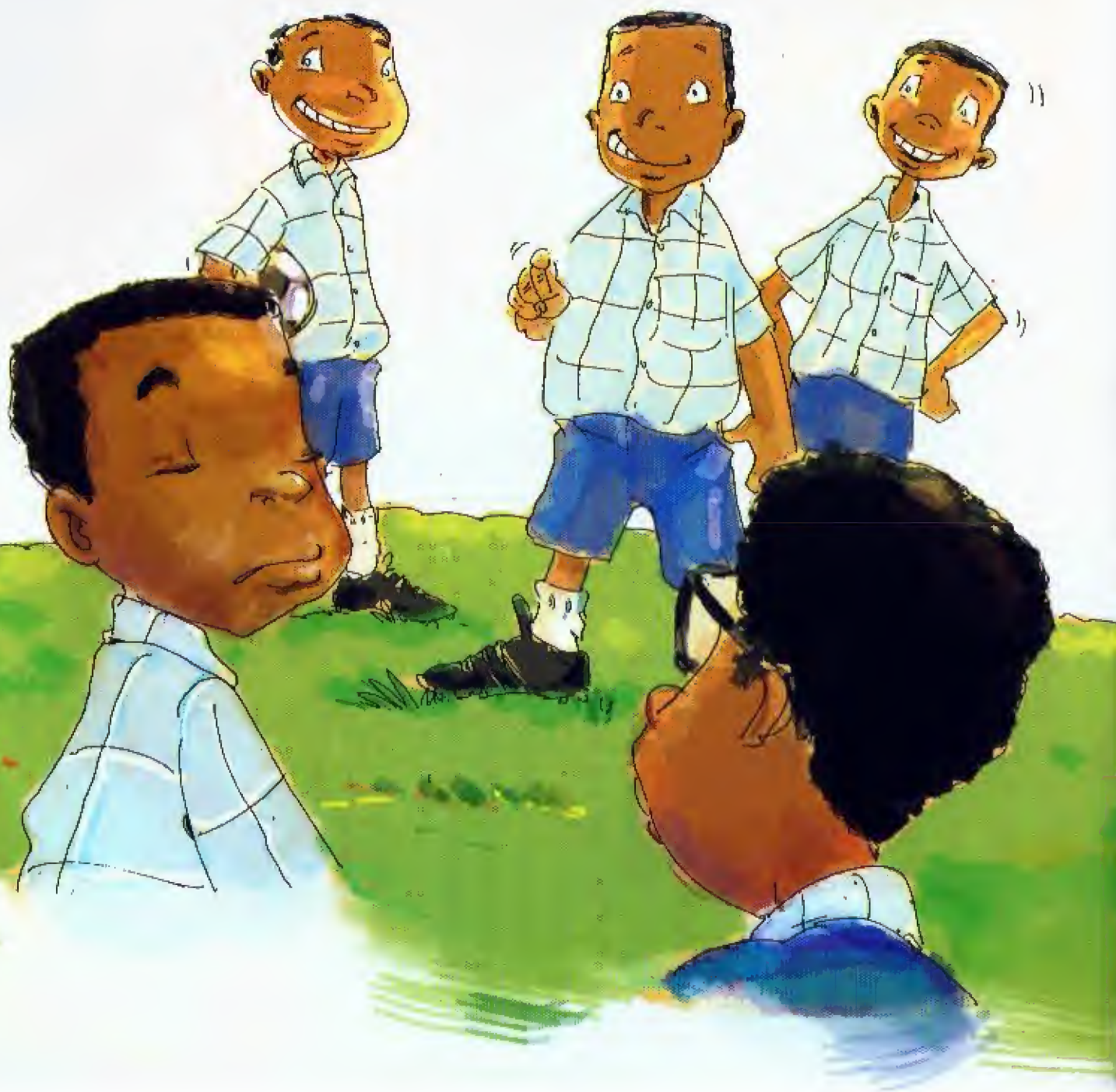
"Did you mention chocolate? I am in!" Eugene screamed.

The friends walked towards the playground to join the rest of the class huddled in conversation.



"Here comes the three musketeers. I wonder what new adventure they are cooking this time," Simon declared.

"Just ignore him," Ashraf said, "and don't tell him about this evening."



"Simon, are you coming to see Ashraf's new flying saucer? We can all book where we want to go. I think I like the air in Lagos, and the sand in Kano is really pretty this time of year," Segun called out.

"Why did you have to go and do that?" Ashraf stormed off, clearly upset.



"I am sorry, but so many of your inventions and experiments haven't worked out," Segun said, as he ran after Ashraf.



"I thought we were friends. You are supposed to support me no matter what," Ashraf muttered, still angry.

"Look, I will be there alright," Segun replied, as they made their way back to the classroom.

Ashraf was secretly delighted that his friends had decided to give him another chance. The rest of the day flew by.





Soon, it was time to get on the bus for home. As soon as the bus stopped in front of his house, Ashraf raced inside. He needed to get comfortable seats on his plane for his two best friends.

He went into the living room and grabbed his mum's favourite purple cushions. He needed some string to make sure they were fastened securely for takeoff, and knew just where to get it. Dad always had string in his tool box.





The only thing left was to secure some refreshments. Mum's chocolate cake would do nicely, but he needed to find two tables to rest them on.

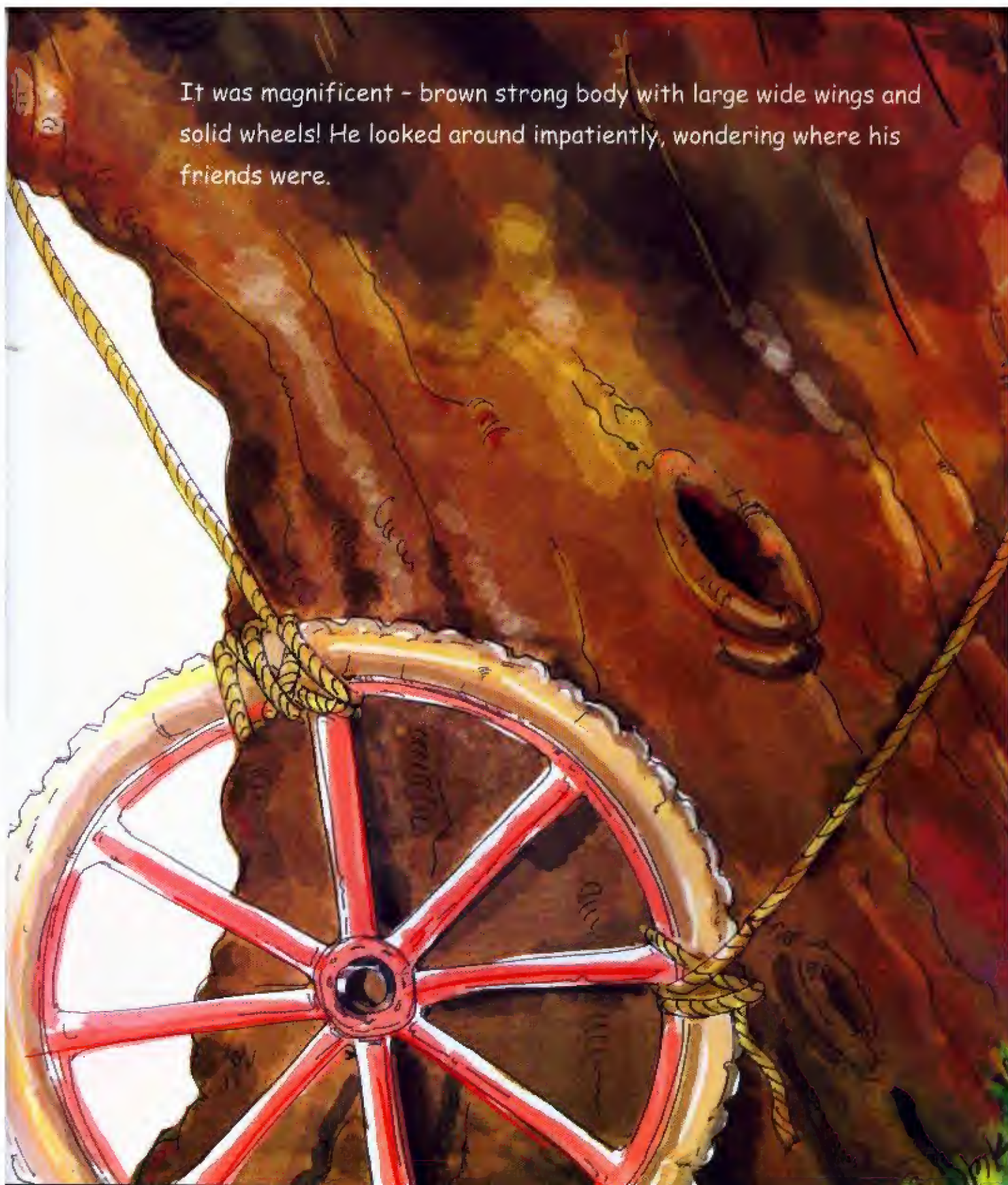
He remembered that he had a pair of round hats. Luckily, they could sit by themselves if there was no wind - the perfect place to put a snack! Now, all he had to do was to get his helmet ready and climb into the cockpit while he waited for his friends to arrive.



Grabbing his yellow bicycle helmet, Ashraf made his way to the backyard. He took a minute to survey his creation in its entire splendor.



It was magnificent - brown strong body with large wide wings and solid wheels! He looked around impatiently, wondering where his friends were.



"Ashraf, where are you? This better be good. I am missing watching soccer with my Dad for this," Segun announced their arrival.



"This is going to make your day. Come on over, I am in the back," Ashraf replied.

He hurriedly climbed into the cockpit, pulling on his helmet. He wanted to make sure he was ready when they got around the back. He checked the wings and the wheels to make sure that everything was perfect for takeoff.

"Hurry, we have to be back by dinner time!" he called out loudly.



Ashraf heard rumbling coming towards him. It became louder as it got nearer. He strained his head to get a better glimpse of what was going on, almost falling out of the window of his fragile cockpit.



"What is going on, Seoun? Eugene, what on earth are you doing?"

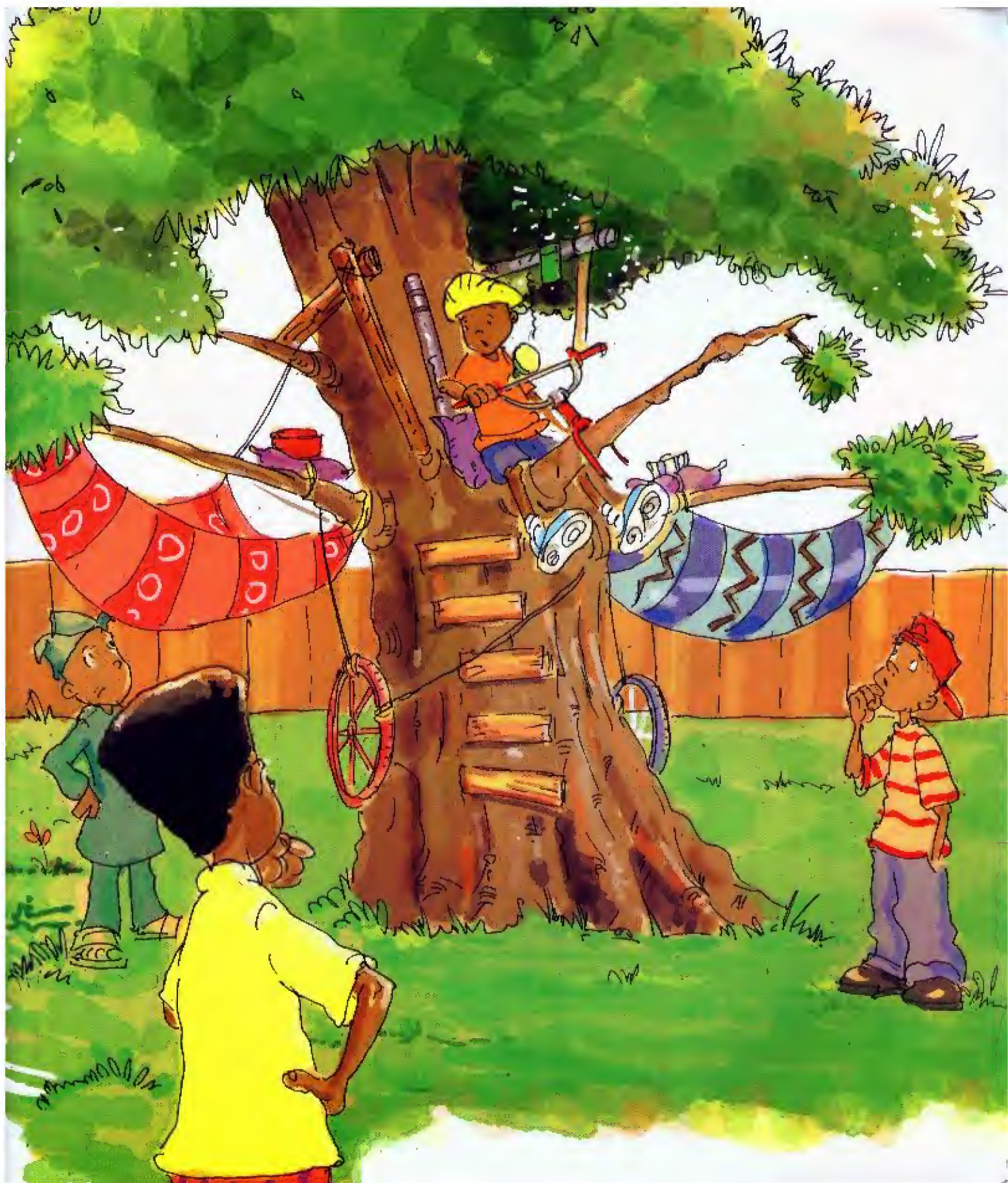
he asked, starting to panic. Ashraf could not believe what he was seeing. Hundreds of children were trampling on his backyard, marching towards him.



There were kids everywhere surrounding Ashraf, staring up at him. They were all talking at once.



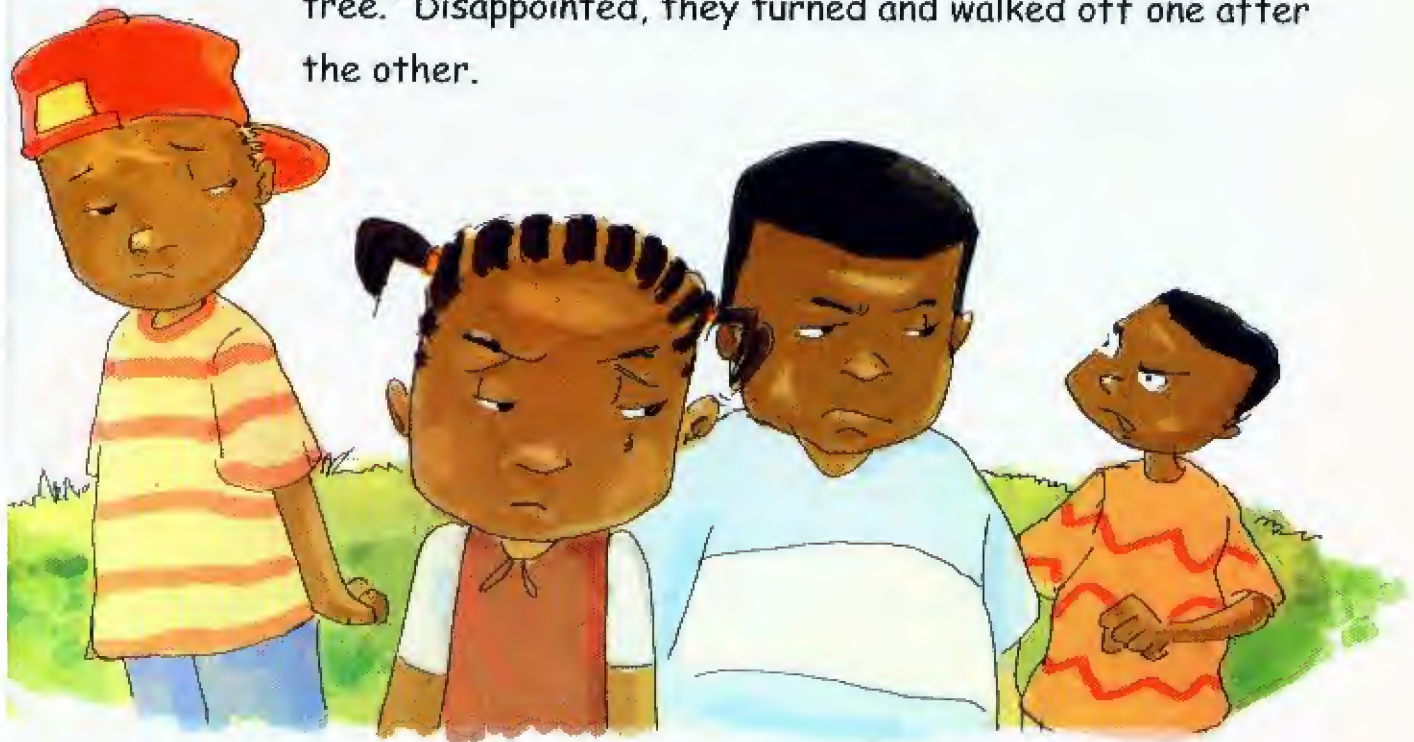
Eugene and Segun pushed through the crowd to get a better look at their friend perched high on a mango tree clasp onto a branch. On two branches were two hats, with a slice of chocolate cake on each.





"Well, at least you have a vivid imagination," Segun said. "Come on, let's go and get our cake," as the two boys scrambled up the tree to join Ashraf.

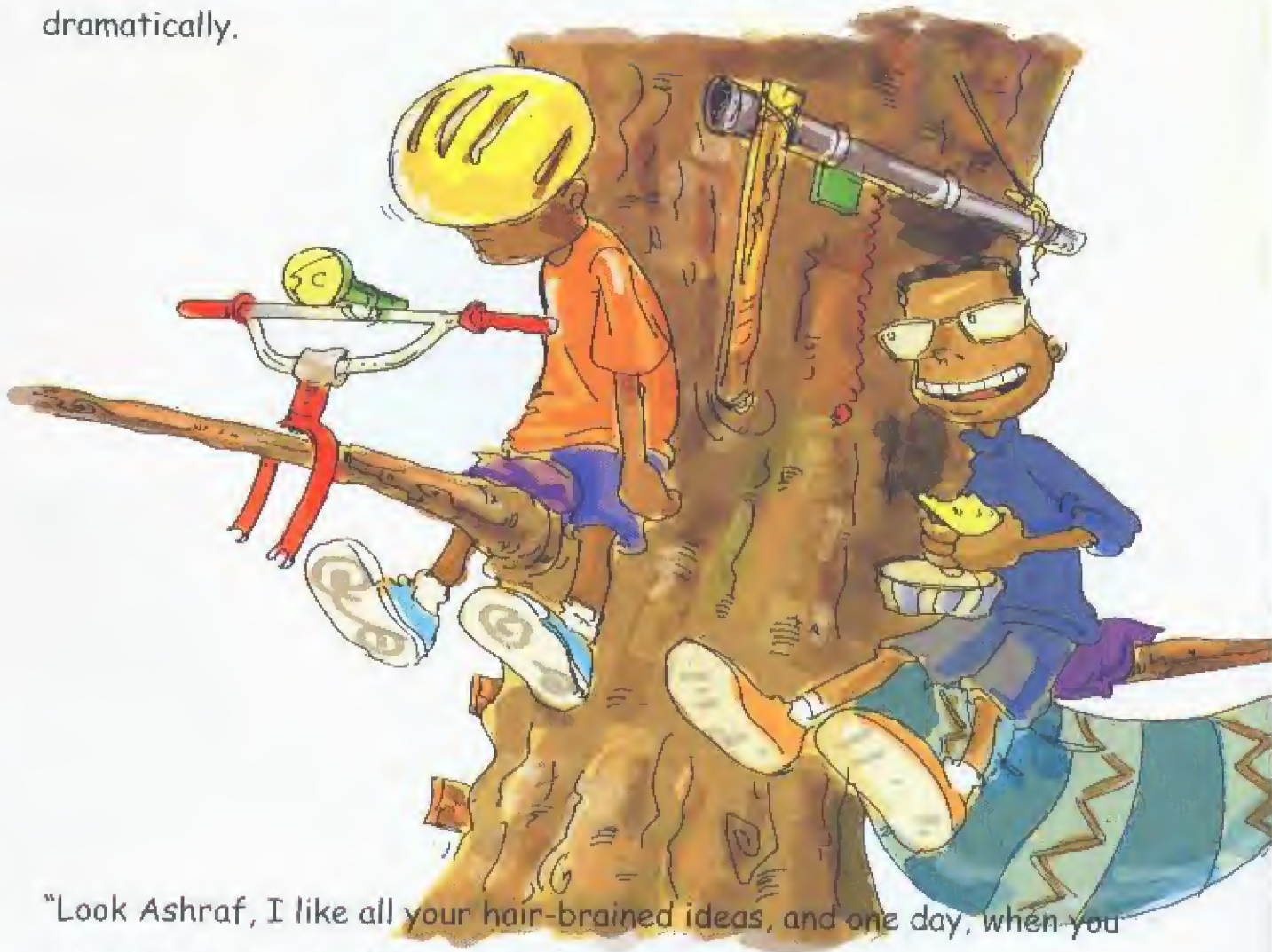
"Some flying saucer," the kids muttered. "It is just a tree." Disappointed, they turned and walked off one after the other.



"Ashraf, you sure know how to get everyone's attention. And the cake is great," Eugene said.



Ashraf sat glumly in his imaginary cockpit. "You shouldn't have told everyone. Now I can't go back to school, not ever," he stated dramatically.



"Look Ashraf, I like all your hair-brained ideas, and one day, when you are grown up, you might build all these things for real," Segun encouraged him. "For now we will help you, but you will need much more than a tree to get to space."

"We can look up inventions in my science book, and maybe we can start small, like how to boil an egg using heat from the sun," Eugene supported.



"You two are great," Ashraf said, hugging them.

"Hey, steady on or we will all fall off the tree!" Eugene warned. "And then, Ashraf would have to invent an instant parachute to save us," he laughed as the three friends made their way down.



Ashraf

The Flying Saucer

The adventure continues for Ashraf as he attempts one science experiment after the other. In The Flying Saucer, Ashraf's hope is to defy gravity by inventing a flying machine. How successful can he get?



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